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ABSTRACT

Seeking to augment previous accounts of Samuel Eliot Morison's life (1887-1976), the document considers Morison not only as historian and literary artist but also as educator. A prolific writer, Morison's main interest was naval history and his books, "Admiral of the Ocean Seas: A Life of Christopher Columbus" (1942) and "John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography" (1959) won him Pulitzer Prizes. However, he also authored histories of the United States. Morison considered the major qualities of an historian to be intellectual honesty, balance, and skepticism. His writing nonetheless reflected prejudiced accounts of slavery and the Cold War. Furthermore, his socioeconomic interpretations were sometimes weak because he did not apply social science methodology to his work, and in this respect he differs from his contemporaries. Morison's concern was that his work would attract both general and specific audiences; he was disturbed by the loss of literary style when the history discipline became professionalized. The segment of Morison's life that is most overlooked by historians is his teaching career, although it contributed to his excellence in historical research and writing. He saw parallels between motivating students and readers. He believed that constant research was vital to quality instruction and often published his findings. (Author/KC)

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SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON

THE MAN, THE HISTORIAN, THE LITERARY ARTIST AND THE EDUCATOR

by

Edward Herman

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts and Sciences (History), Hunter College, The City University of New York.

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INTRODUCTION

Samuel Eliot Morison was one of the most popular and prolific American historians. Excellence was evident in most of what he did, whether tracing the routes of great explorers, observing United States naval operations in World War II, or writing a literary masterpiece.

This paper considers themes in Morison's life. His Boston family had deep colonial roots. He attempted to carry the nineteenth century tradition of the patrician historian, who maintained intellectual independence and wrote for an unspecialized audience, into the nineteen seventies. He believed that three qualities were essential to the good historian — intellectual honesty, balance and skepticism. As a shrewd businessman who had a keen interest in financial profit, Morison rarely let lucrative opportunities pass. Methodologically, he disagreed with many twentieth century historians, since he believed society changed because of individuals, rather than as a result of depersonalized internal or external forces. He will undoubtedly be remembered most of all for a graphic, descriptive style equal to that of almost any literary artist. Consideration of him as an educator not only shows that teaching was an integral part of his career, but also illustrates his upper class, New England outlook. Morison's shortcomings will also be considered in this study. The most significant of these were his prejudiced accounts of slavery and the Cold War. Furthermore, his socioeconomic interpretations were sometimes weak because he did not incorporate social science techniques into his work.

My research is primarily based upon published articles and books, and the manuscript collection of Curtis Brown, Morison's literary agent,

at Columbia University. At Morison's direction, his papers will not be available to researchers until 2024.[1] I have been unable to communicate with his family who are following his wishes. David Herold considered Morison in his 1973 doctoral dissertation, A Species of Literary Lion: Essays on Morison, Freeman, DeVoto and Becker, and in a subsequent article, "Samuel Eliot Morison and the Ocean Sea."[2] Alfred Knopf's article, "Reading, Writing & History: Historian and Publisher," a reminiscence of his friendship with him, was also useful.[3] I am particularly grateful to Walter Muir Whitehill for providing me with an advance copy of his forward to Sailor Historian, a work that was extremely useful in filling out biographical details.[4] These authors, however, did not consider Morison as an educator, and did not discuss his failure to use social science techniques. Knopf's article was the only source that indicated Morison's aptitude as a businessman. The recollections of Frederick K. Henrich, as Associate Librarian at the State University of New York at Buffalo, who studied under Morison in the 1930's, were also available.[5]

Morison would probably have been very much against this essay. Speaking of William H. Prescott, Morison stated that his work is to be

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1 Letter from Antha C. McDonald, March 11, 1977.

2 (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1973), and Dalhousie Review, LIV (Winter, 1974-75), 741-48.

3 American Heritage, XXVIII (April, 1977), 100-106.

4 unpublished typed manuscript.

5 Frederick Henrich, private interview at the State University of New York at Buffalo, March, 1977.

admired, not analyzed or "plucked apart."[6] Likewise, Morison's style should not be "plucked apart," but studied seriously if others are to benefit from its genius. Moreover, Henry Steele Commager advised me to write about another historian, since Morison disliked methodological studies.[7]

My approach differs from Morison's. I agree with the Social Science Research Council in its assertion that method is basic to the study of any discipline because scholarship depends upon the successful use of research tools and techniques.[8] Students can learn a great deal about the discipline of history by critically studying the master historians.

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6 "Prescott: The American Thucydides," Atlantic, CC (November, 1957), 167.

7 Letter from Henry Steele Commager, March 3, 1977.

8 Report of the Committee on Historiography, The Social Sciences in Historical Study, Bulletin 64 (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1954), p. 18.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Morison's background was characterized by inherited wealth and social grace. He was born on July 9, 1887.[9] His maternal grandfather, Samuel Eliot, who ranked first in the class of 1834 at Harvard, founded a Greek professorship at the same university, and became President of Trinity College in Hartford in 1860.[10] Eliot married Emily Marshall Otis, a granddaughter to colonial and Federalist leader, Harrison Gray Otis. Moreover, Harvard President Charles W. Eliot was a first cousin to Samuel Eliot. Regarding his paternal relationships, Morison offered scant information in One Boy's Boston, a recollection of his youth. His father, John Holmes Morison, a Harvard graduate who came from a wealthy Baltimore family, married Emmy Eliot, the daughter of Samuel and Emily in 1886.[11] Grandfather Nathaniel Holmes Morison, the first provost of the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, graduated from Harvard with Samuel Eliot, but they probably were not friends.[12]

Morison had an excellent education. Grandfather Eliot began studying with him when he was three years old, and by the time he was five,

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9 "Samuel Eliot Morison," Who's Who, 1976-77, 1688.

10 Samuel Eliot Morison, One Boy's Boston, 1887-1901 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), pp. 2-3.

11 Ibid., p. 13.

12 Walter Muir Whitehill, "Forward," from the forthcoming Morison Reader (unpublished typed manuscripts), p. 3.

Morison was learning French.[13] He remembered two books that particularly impressed him as a child, Arctic Explorations by Elisha Kent Kane and Decatur and Somers by Molly Elliot Seawell, the second of which influenced his interest in naval history.[14] Morison attended Noble's School in Boston, and Saint Paul's in Concord. Besides studying Latin for seven years and Greek for four, he also pursued French, mathematics, English, literature, composition, ancient and English history, chemistry and physics. He attended Harvard between 1904 and 1912, earning his Bachelor's Degree in 1908, his Master's Degree in 1909, and his PhD in 1912.[15] His family absorbed printing and production costs for his two volume doctoral dissertation on Harrison Grat Otis.[16] While at Harvard, noted historians, such as Edward Channing, Charles Haskins, and Roger Bigelow Merriman, particularly impressed Morison, who later admitted that he never again "...encountered such a remarkable body of gentlemen and scholars..."[17]

Many factors led him towards a career in history, and towards an appreciation of the sea. His maternal grandfather, who was always available to answer questions, maintained a library that included materials about voyages and sea monsters, as well as manuscripts re-

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[13] Morison, One Boy's, p. 14.

[14] Ibid., p. 15.

[15] "Morison," Who's Who, 1688.

[16] Samuel Eliot Morison, "Books by Samuel Eliot Morison: Very Confidential Report to Curtis Brown," (unpublished typed manuscript: Curtis Brown Collection, Columbia University, 1952), p. 1.

[17] Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 299.

lating to trade with Vancouver, Alaska, Hawaii, and China.[18] Summer vacations with his parents in Northeast Harbor, Maine likewise contributed towards his love for the water. Albert Bushnell Hart of the Harvard History Department also encouraged Morison to study history. After Morison, whose original ambition was to be a mathematician, failed a calculus course, Hart inspired the student to write a theme about Harrison Gray Otis, Morison's great-great grandfather.[19]

Between 1913 and 1926 Morison was active in both academic and public affairs at Harvard, as well as in Europe. Though he obtained a position at the University of California in 1913, he returned East to become a Harvard instructor in 1915.[20] When the United States entered World War I, Morison enlisted as a private. Following the conflict, he served on the Baltic Commission at the Paris Peace Conference, working on the independance of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but he returned to academic life after resigning from the Commission because of disagreements over the Versailles Treaty.[21] Direct relationships between this Paris experience and later writings on war could not be detected. By publishing his second book, The Maritime History of Massachusetts (1921), he illustrated his ability to see through what he planned. He decided as early as 1910, while

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18 Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., By Land and By Sea: Essays and Addressess (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), p. 66.

19 John F. Baker, "PW Interviews Samuel Eliot Morison," Publishers Weekly, CCVI (November, 1974), 6.

20 "Samuel Eliot Morison," Current Biography, 1962, 302.

21 Adolf A. Berle, Jr., "Reminiscences," (Oral History Research Project, Columbia University, 1974), p. 38.

reading the Clipper Ship Era by Arthur H. Clark, to someday write a history of Massachusetts traders.[22] While abroad again between 1922 and 1925, Morison spent some of the happiest years of his life as Harold Vyvyan Harmsworth Professor of American History at Oxford University.[23] He wrote the original edition of the Oxford History of the United States, a textbook for use by British students during this period.

In 1926, one year after returning to Harvard, the University recognized his interest in local affairs, and asked him to serve as their official Tercentennial historian.[24] The teaching of Massachusetts and colonial history gave him a keen sense of the importance of his beloved Harvard in American culture. Morison believed that colonial intellectual life would have been "impoverished" if not for the college, which represented the beginnings of our intellectual history.[25] He completed three volumes by 1936, the year of the three hundredth anniversary -- The Development of Harvard University, 1869-1929 (1930), Three Centuries of Harvard (1936), and the multivolume Tercentenial History of Harvard College and University (1929-36). He was awarded the Jusserand medal and the Columbia University Doubat Prize for the latter work. More than most college histories, these

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22 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 27.

23 Ibid., p. 3.

24 "Samuel Eliot Morison," Current Biography, 303.

25 Samuel Eliot Morison, Founding of Harvard College (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. vi., and Samuel Eliot Morison, Harvard College In The Seventeenth Century, Part I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), p. v.

volumes have been regarded as major contributions to intellectual history.

Morison became fascinated with Columbus while preparing his course on colonial history during August, 1916.[26] He believed that examining the explorer's landfalls and coastings was the only way to study him as a seaman and navigator.[27] Between 1939 and 1940, with the assistance of Paul Hammound, a sailor and financier, Morison led the Harvard Expedition which retraced the routes of Columbus. The crew of twenty-four spent five months traveling to the Azors, the Santa Maria Islands, Lisbon, Palos -- the harbor from which Columbus departed in 1492, Seville, the Canaries Islands, Trinadad, Margarita Island, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Jamaica in a one hundred and forty foot barkentine and a forty-five foot ketch.[28] They identified twenty-five harbors and headlands discovered by Columbus. Besides Admiral of The Ocean Seas: A Life of Christopher Columbus (1942), A work which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1943, and grossed the author thirty thousand dollars by 1952 and more thereafter, two other books resulted from these activities -- The Second Voyage of Christopher Columbus From Cadiz To Hispanola and The Discovery of the Lesser Antilles (1939) and

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26 Samuel Eliot Morison, Sailor Historian, A Samuel Eliot Morison Reader, ed. by Emily Morison Beck (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), p. 1

27 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 99.

28 Samuel Eliot Morison, "Columbus' Routes With A Sea-Going Historian On His Modern Barkentino 'Capitana'," Life, VIII (March 25, 1940), 103-106.

Portuguese Voyages To America In The Fifteenth Century (1940).[29]

Morison's most ambitious project was his fifteen volume history of American naval operations during World War II. When serving on a planning commission for the Hyde Park Library he appended a one page proposal to a report, and Judge Samuel Rosenman made sure that the White House got the message.[30] Roosevelt accepted the proposal, since he was very much impressed with Admiral of The Ocean Seas. Morison was commissioned Lieutenant Commander in the Naval Reserve, and took part in many operations learning first hand how the Navy fights. He sailed on fifteen ships, including a cruiser that was hit by a torpedo and another that was attacked by a Kamikaze. He was an eyewitness to the North African landings, participated in the Solomons and Gilbert Island campaigns, saw the Battle of Okinawa from the Flagship Tennessee, and earned seven Battle Stars and a Legion of Merit with a combat clasp.[31] Morison was awarded the $51,000 Swiss Balzen Foundation prize in 1963 for this work.[32]

Though work on the naval history preoccupied him through 1960, during these post war years Morison also published The Ropemakers of

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29 Morison, "Books By," p. 3.

30 Lewis Nichols, "When History Was Being Made The Historian Was There," review of Mount Desert Island, and The Liquidation of The Japanese Empire: 1945, by Samuel Eliot Morison, in the New York Times, June 5, 1960, sec. 7, p. 6.

31 Ibid., and "Samuel Eliot Morison," Current Biography, 303.

32 New York Times, May 16, 1976, sec. 1, p. 36.

Plymouth (1950), By Land and By Sea (1953), Christopher Columbus Mariner (1955), The Story of the Old Colony of New Plymouth (1956), The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England (1956), Freedom in Contemporary Society (1956), John Paul Jones: A Sailor's Biography (1959), which was awarded a Pulitzer Prize, and The Story of Mount Desert Island, Maine (1960).

Few people have had retirements as active as Morison's. He left Harvard when he reached the University's retirement age of sixty-eight in 1955,[33] but even when he was seventy-two years old in 1960, he maintained offices in the Widener Library, Washington, D.C., Newport, Rhode Island, and his Boston home.[34] After completing his naval history in 1962, he published One Boy's Boston (1962), The Two-Ocean War (1963), Vistas of History (1964), Spring Tides (1965), a revised edition of The Oxford History of The American People (1965), Old Bruin: Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1967), Harrison Gray Otis: The Urbane Federalist (1969), Samuel de Champlain: Father of New France (1972), and the two volume set, The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages (1971) and The Southern Voyages (1974). When in his eighties, as part of his research for The Southern Voyages, Morison flew over the routes of Pinzon, Cabral, Vespucci, Cabot and de Vaca, and he followed the explorations of Drake from a Coast Guard cutter.[35]

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33 Letter from Samuel Eliot Morison, July 26, 1972.

34 Nichols, "When History was Being Made," p. 6.

35 Samuel Eliot Morison, The European Discovery of America: The Southern Voyages A.D. 1492-1616 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. ix.

The author admitted following publication that:

> I'm too old and tired now and I've finished everything I promised myself I would do fifty years ago. Why should I jeopardize my reputation by going on like one of those ancient historians who fall into decline and finally receive only pitying reviews. 36

Despite his age and lack of strength, less than a year after making this statement, Morison was still described at the age of eighty as:

> ...something over six feet, stooped only slightly like an abbot in his scriptorium pausing at a moment to consider a sudden thought. He is crisp as a crease and has an eye brilliant, imperious, and inquiring. His is a stern, handsome face with portrait-like qualities: no nonsense, veridical, without the slightest hint of nescience - but gentle for all that, especially when just this side of a sportive smile. He has a tight, decisive mouth that seems to me always ready to announce with Teofilo Folengo...(let him read me who reads everything.) 37

My ability to locate only scant information concerning Morison's family life indicates that he was, in some ways, a very private person. He married Elizabeth S. Greene in 1910 with whom he had four children, Elizabeth Gray, Emily Marshall, Peter Greene, and Catherine.[38] After his wife died in 1945, he married his cousin Priscilla Barton in December, 1949, but she died of cancer in 1973.[39] The cause and date of his son Peter's death is unknown to me. Though Morison wrote Fullness of Life in memory of his first wife, and Vita Nuova: A Memoir of Priscilla Barton Morison in memory of his second one, both were printed privately for relatives and close friends, and were, thus,

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36 Baker, "PW Interviews," 6.

37 Alexander Theroux, "Good Old With Everything," Esquire, LXXXIII (April, 1975), 150.

38 "Samuel Eliot Morison," Current Biography, 304.

not available to me.[40]

Morison's life and attitudes were those of a New England aristocrat. One reviewer well described him as:

> ...A Brahmin gentleman of the last century and retaining intact the values of his youth. Morison (was) a product of the WASP renaissance of the turn of the century when the scions of old Yankee stock were themselves as a distinct ethnic group possessing certain desirable traditions and values, and being threatened by the teeming immigrant masses. They determined to shape themselves up-through prep schools, hereditary societies, the Episcopal Church; to shape up the whole society - through philanthropy, social work, progressivism.[41]

Morison claimed a bit defensively that his childhood environment was not the "...stuffy, provincial, purse-proud, prejudiced, and one hundred percent Republican society often attributed to Boston."[42] He argued that his father favored civil service and tariff reforms, and ran for public office twice, as a Democrat in 1892 and as an Independent in 1896.[43] However, he then stated that when he was a child, "Most of the families (the Morisons) knew were professional people or bankers..."[44] To gain access to this group, one had:

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[40] Fullness of Life: A Memoir of Elizabeth Shaw Morison (Boston: By the Author, 1945), and Vita Nuova: A Memoir of Priscilla Barton Morison (Northeast Harbor, Maine: By the Author, 1975).

[41] B. Bruce-Briggs, "From the Quarterdeck," Review of The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, and The Southern Voyages, by Samuel Eliot Morison, in Commentary, May, 1975, pp. 81-82.

[42] Morison, One Boy's, p. 59.

[43] Ibid., p. 60.

[44] Ibid., p. 63.

> ...to buy a townhouse on Commonwealth Avenue or Beacon Street, and a place on the North Shore, and send (their) children to private schools in the Back Bay. A certain minimum of breeding and manners was (also) required... [45]

A number of close friends praised Morison highly. Adolf Berle stated that "...under (his) stern New England profile, he was one of the kindest, one of the most humorous, in some ways, one of the tenderest men I've ever known."[46] Speaking of Morison's sense of humor, Berle remembered that Morison borrowed money from colleagues on the Baltic Commission, and signed an I.O.U. for X rubles "payable when the Czar is restored."[47] Though he thought that Morison was very conceited, Ralph Lowell still admitted that he was a fabulous person.[48] Furthermore, Perry H. Knowlton, President of Curtis Brown, said that his client, a gentleman who was very easy to work with, had an endless drive to research subjects all over the world.[49] Following his death on May 15, 1976, from the effects of a stroke, the New York Times paid tribute to Morison, calling him the undisputed "Grand Old Man of American historians" whose writing was enthusiastic and a pleasure to read.[50]

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45 Morison, One Boy's, p. 53.

46 Berle, "Reminescences," p. 37.

47 Ibid.

48 Ralph Lowell, "Reminiscences," (Oral History Research Project, Columbia University, 1964), p. 52.

49 Letter from Perry H. Knowlton, May 17, 1977.

50 New York Times, May 16, 1976, sec. 1, p. 1.

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON - THE HISTORIAN

Morison had very definite views on the subjects historians should study, and on the qualities of good historian. He decided, after completing his doctoral degree, to study the sea as it affected history, since he thought scholars should study what they find personally interesting.[51] He criticized Puritan historian William Hubbard in the Intellectual Life of Colonial New England for his failure to bring personal experiences into his work.[52] Morison also wrote about local affairs, since he thought it enabled him to see aspects of history that are often hidden when considering events on larger scales, and it made him a respected member of the community, rather than merely another teacher.

> The national field teaches you what to look for in local history; whilst intensive cultivation of grass-roots - or, as in my case, coral reefs and mudflats - teaches you things that you cannot see in the broad national view. Local history as a sideline also serves to integrate any historian with his community, to make him a valued and respected member of it, instead of "just another professor." 53 (faith, 271)

While writing about subjects of personal interest and local affairs, he did not ignore the marketability of his work, which very often led to lucrative dealings. The Plymouth Cordage Company paid him five thousand dollars to write The Ropemakers of Plymouth after

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51 Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., Vistas of History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 27.

52 (2nd; New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 162.

53 Samuel Eliot Morison, "Faith of an Historian," American Historical Review, LVI (January, 1951), 271.

someone else did the research and compiled rough drafts of chapter subjects.[54] The author considered this "a very profitable opusculum," since "It took only six weeks of (his) time, and that in the country."[55]

Morison illustrated shrewd businesslike qualities at numerous other times, often concerning himself with commercial details that his colleagues would probably have left to their literary agents. By Land and By Sea was an attempt "to cash in" on previously published articles and speeches for which he was never paid.[56] He hoped to sell movie rights to Old Bruin, believing it might be profitable because of frequent references to Blacks.[57] Furthermore, after receiving a one thousand dollar offer for contributing the first chapter to a book on the Dominican Republic, Morison told his literary agent to "Screw as much as you can" out of these transactions, since he thought that the publisher was attempting to use his work as an advertising gimmick.[58] Also, Morison stated when referring to the Puritan Pronaos, that a new edition might be "a chance to make a little money."[59]

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54 Morison, "Books By," p. 5.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., p. 6.

57 Letter, Samuel Eliot Morison to Alan Collins, December 12, 1967, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Curtis Brown Manuscript Collection.

58 Letter, Samuel Eliot Morison to Alan Collins, November 19, 1956, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Curtis Brown Manuscript Collection.

59 Letter, Samuel Eliot Morison to John A.S. Cushman, November 11, 1954, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Curtis Brown Manuscript Collection.

He expressed strong resentment against publishers whom he believed were not adequately representing his interests. He complained that Little, Brown failed to guard his media rights satisfactorily, as an English producer used his material in a film about Columbus, and Fred Waring quoted his work on television.[60] Alfred Knopf was also criticized for failing to advertise Of Plymouth Plantation during the Thanksgiving season in conjunction with the movie, "Plymouth Adventure."[61]

Morison was sometimes very hostile towards projects that minimized his financial gain. When asked to present a series of lectures before the Lowell Institute for a mere eight hundred dollars, he replied, "What! for that beggars pittance?"[62] Moreover, Morison hoped to revise Growth of The American Republic without Henry Steele Commager in the 1950's, but the latter, who wanted to share the writing and profits, stood "in the way."[63] On another occasion, he criticized his dealings with American Heritage as unprofitable.[64]

Besides financial details, Morison also concerned himself with three qualities that he thought were essential to good history -- intellectual honesty, balance, and skepticism. Intellectual honesty, the most important, is the ability to face facts straightforwardly.

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60 Morison, "Books By," p. 3.

61 Alfred A. Knopf, "Reading, Writing, and History: Historian and Publisher," American Heritage, XXVIII (April, 1977), p. 103.

62 Lowell, "Reminiscences," p. 52.

63 Morison, "Books By," p. 2.

64 Letter, Samuel Eliot Morison to Curtis Brown, Ltd., February 19, 1968, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Curtis Brown Manuscript Collection.

He believed that one who fails to do this cannot be a reputable scholar.[65] Morison suggested that the student strengthen his intellectual honesty through the editing of historical sources, a task that forces him to study the basic materials.[66] However, he thought intellectual honesty should not preclude the use of prejudice and imagination, for man is sometimes passionate and emotional.

Morison maintained that balance, mesure, is the second most vital quality for the historian.[67] This is the ability to consider various aspects of history in their proper perspectives. For example, socioeconomic aspects of a subject should not be discussed in a vacuum that ignores political developments. Morison exclaimed that a sense of balance might be innate rather than acquired, though a good teacher can help develop the quality in his students.[68] Recognizing this principle early in his career, The New York Times, in its review of the first edition of the Harrison Gray Otis biography, said Morison displayed, "...natural sympathy with his subject, being well balanced by the accuracy and judgment of a trained mind."[69]

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[65] Morison, "Faith," p. 262.

[66] Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 39.

[67] Morison, "Faith," p. 269.

[68] Ibid.

[69] "A Federalist: Life and Times of Harrison Gray Otis," a review of The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis, Federalist, 1765-1848, by Samuel Eliot Morison, in the New York Time, January 4, 1914, sec. 6, p. 771.

The Oxford History, published in 1927, illustrated measure very well in its treatment of the Indian question.

> Colonists in close contact with a race of different colour and 'inferior civilization', have consistently flouted the law, and left the natives the choice of helotry or extermination. If the North American Indian has approached the latter condition, it was because he preferred to die free than to live civilized. 70

The author treated the Indian viewpoint with great sensitivity.

Morison believed, nevertheless, that an historian is justified in ignoring particular phases of issues which others have adequately described. In The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England, the author ignored sociopolitical aspects of society because fellow scholars had studied them adequately.[71] He omitted economic questions in Sources and Documents Illustrating The American Revolution, since they had been considered by Professor Callender in a previous book.[72]

Morison's history was not, however, as balanced as it might have been. His attitude towards slavery in the 1950 edition of Growth of The American Republic was extremely ethnocentric. He stated that:

> As for Sambo, whose wrongs moved the abolitionists to wrath and tears, there is some reason to believe that he suffered less than any other class in the South from its 'peculiar institution'. The majority of slaves were adequately fed, well cared for, and apparently happy...Although brought to America by force, the incurably optimistic Negro soon became

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70 Samuel Eliot Morison. The Oxford History of The United States, 1783-1917 (2 Vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1927), I, p. 197.

71 Samuel Eliot Morison. The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England (2nd ed.; New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 4.

72 (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. v.

> attached to the country, and devoted to his 'white folks'. Slave insurrections were planned - usually by the free Negroes but invariably betrayed by some faithful black; and trained obedience kept most slaves faithful throughout the Civil War. 73

Morison continued arguing that:

> If we overlook the original sin of the slave trade, there was much to be said for slavery as a transition from a primitive to a more mature culture. The Negro learned his master's language, received his religion, and accepted his moral standards. 74

Morison assumed that Western language, culture, religion, and moral standards are superior to those of Africa. Perhaps his personal feeling towards Blacks played a significant role in this ethnocentric interpretation. Referring to the civil rights movement of the 1960's, he argued that a place should be made for Blacks in the power structure, since they have the "potential" of becoming good citizens.[75] An historian's racial attitudes will most certainly affect his written work.

The author did not discuss women in the first edition of the Oxford History as completely as he had Indians. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Louisa May Alcott, Emily Dickinson, and Harriet Beecher Stowe were not listed in the index, and mention of the Seneca Falls convention could be found neither in the index nor the text. Morison somewhat improved his coverage of women in the 1965 revised

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73 Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steel Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (2 Vols.; 4th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), I, p. 537.

74 Ibid., p. 539.

75 New York Times, December 16, 1968, p. 34.

edition, which spoke of the above, as well as the Seneca Falls meeting, however briefly.[76] More significantly, the 1965 book included a good description of "The Sexual Upheaval" between 1902 and 1939.[77]

Morison's treatment of the Cold War was also unbalanced. In his presidential address before the American Historical Association in 1950, he told the historian to "...deal gently with your people's traditions! If you feel the urge to pull something apart, try your hand on a myth rather than a tradition."[78] In the same speech, Morison said historians were responsible for the "spiritual unpreparedness for World War II among American youth, since during the 1920's and 1930's scholars, such as Charles Beard, not only failed to emphasize, but also belittled the importance of wars in society."[79] Jesse Lemisch has pointed out the absurdity of an historian first speaking of balance and then telling his colleagues to preserve uncritically national traditions. Morison, during the Cold War, defended the glories of battle, while depreciating the evils of pacifism.[80] Furthermore, in the 1955 edition of the Harvard Guide To American History, Morison expressed his hope that the historian

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[76] Morison, Oxford History (2nd ed.; 1972), II, p. 272, III, p. 237.

[77] Ibid., III, pp. 243-248, passim.

[78] Morison, "Faith," p. 271.

[79] Ibid., pp. 266-67.

[80] Jesse Lemisch, On Active Service In War and Peace: Politics and Ideology In The American Historical Profession, with an Introduction by Thomas Schofield (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1975), pp. 69-72, passim.

would support patriotic societies, such as Daughters of the American Revolution, by delivering speeches and preparing information for anniversary broadcasts, rather than participating in civil rights or liberal activities.[81]

Coverage of the post World War II era in the Oxford History is an example of Cold War historiography. Morison fell into the trap that John Higham urged historians to avoid.

> Let us beware of the easy temptations of moral judgement in essaying the difficult adventure of moral criticism. Let us operate on any subject with a conviction of its dignity and worth. Let us grant every actor in a moral drama the fullest measure of his particular integrity; let us not destroy the drama by hastening to condemn or to absolve. [82]

Speaking of the U-2 incident, Morison said that:

> The net result was to put the United States in the wrong, to enable Khrushchev to pillory Eisenhower as an aggressor, and to break up the summit conference - as Khrushchev probably intended anyway - without accomplishing anything. [83]

The author could not imagine that the United States as an aggressor -- even when caught spying. Also, what evidence did he have to indicate that Khrushchev's intent was to destroy the summit? Moreover, Morison displayed a "better dead than red" attitude when criticizing

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[81] Jesse Lemisch, On Active Service In War and Peace: Politics and Ideology In The American Historical Profession, with an Introduction by Thomas Schofield (Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1975), p. 71.

[82] John Higham, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian As A Moral Critic," American Historical Review, LXVII (April, 1962), p. 620.

[83] Morison, Oxford History (2nd ed.; 1972), III, p. 469.

Bertrand Russell, who, according to Morison, represented "liberal elements" playing "dupes,"[84] Russell admitted that he would rather live under Communist domination than die with the entire human race, in a nuclear holocaust. Morison's coverage of the Korean encounter was one-sided. He said that, "After Russian troops evacuated (the) North..., The United States pulled her garrison out of the southern half, leaving only a small military mission to help Rhee create his own army."[85] The author did not consider that our small military mission might have exacerbated the already tense situation. He continued, describing the invading Chinese forces:

> ...who lunged into this strategic vacuum, attacked each strung-out column on its exposed flank, announcing their presence in the initial engagements by eerie bugle calls, weird whistles, chirps and howls.[86]

In this case literary flair does not coincide with balance. The author gave an American soldier's viewpoint, while placing that of the opposition in an ethnocentric context. The Chinese probably regarded their noises as proper battle cries. Also, the movement of American troops north of the thirty-eigth parallel was not considered a factor in provoking China.

Fortunately, Morison's use of skepticism, the third vital quality of an ideal historian, had none of the difficulties that we have seen in discussing balance. This characteristic, very much related to intellectual honesty, is the ability to question, or as Marc Bloch stated,

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[84] Morison, Oxford History (2nd ed.; 1972), III, p. 414.

[85] Ibid., p. 433.

[86] Ibid., p. 437.

"cross examine," an historical source against other documents of the same era.[87] Intellectual honesty, Morison believed, is the ability to abandon preconceived notions when evaluating facts, rather than the actual questioning of their authenticity. He thought that skepticism towards one's personal beliefs, as well as those of colleagues, will lead to more balanced interpretations.[88] Robin Higham of Kansas State University, remembering how Morison attempted to develop skepticism among his students, said that the professor assigned a term paper in which the students were required to use only those primary sources selected by their instructor, and explain why they accepted one account over that of another.[89]

Consideration of Morison in comparison to other twentieth century historians is vital to fully comprehend his work. It will be shown below that despite his popularity and great success, he had little in common, methodologically, with most colleagues during his career.

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87 Marc Bloch, The Historian's Craft, with an Introduction by Joseph Strayer, trans. by Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage, 1953), p. 65.

88 Morison, "Faith," p. 269.

89 Robin Higham and Philip K. Lundeberg, "Samuel Eliot Morison, 1887-1976: Historian, Teacher, Sailor, and Admiral," Military Affairs, XXX (December, 1976), p. 146.

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON AND OTHER HISTORIANS

Morison was not a typical twentieth century historian. His work rarely fell into the historiographical trends outlined in John Higham's History: The Development of Historical Studies In The United States.[90] During the last part of the nineteenth century and initial years of this one, according to Higham, the historian emphasized political institutions, while attempting to develop generalized laws that would govern interpretations of the past.[91]

By the second decade of this century, however, younger students, who hoped to incorporate sociological methods into history, began criticizing their elders.[92] James Harvey Robinson, author of The New History, reflected this attitude, arguing that scholars must use the discipline as a vehicle for understanding present day society.[93] He thought that the incorporation of social science techniques into historical interpretations would facilitate the process.

The scientific historian and the "new" historian, who followed Robinson's viewpoint, both wrote in a depersonalized manner that limited the roles of individuals in society. The former attempted to study institutional developments as laboratory science. Though the latter expanded his scope to consider the effects of socioeconomic factors upon

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90 (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965).

91 Ibid., pp. 92-103, passim.

92 Ibid., pp. 104-16, passim.

93 Ibid., pp. 111-13, passim.

society, he still attempted to maintain the same control over events as a chemist would.

Morison, on the other hand, criticized those who attempted to discover generalized concepts that govern the discipline. He detected "a certain frustration" in the work of Henry Adams because the latter failed in his attempts to uncover laws that operate like those of physics or chemistry.[94] Morison believed that man, who, by nature is emotional, and sometimes irrational, should be studied as such.

> Since the life of man, at least in his great moments, is emotional, prejudiced, and passionate, the historian should try to express some of the emotion, the prejudice, and the passion in his prose; and he must through his imagination, enter to some extent into those feelings in order to portray them with sympathetic warmth or appropriate indignation. He will have no difficulty in doing this if he approaches his subject with verve and enthusiasm. Unless it be the dull pedantry of the average doctoral dissertation in history, there is no quality more repugnant to readers than a chilly impartiality.[95]

His ability to describe man's emotions very often gave the reader a sense of participation in the events.

Social science methods applied to history, Morison believed, devalued the role of the individual in society. Pointing to George Washington, he argued that the General, by living a highly disciplined life, took the course, which according to the followers of Freud, makes people "thwarted, inhibited, and repressed."[96] Although he chose to serve his country when he had the means to live a life of comfort, and he restrained his love for Sally Fairfax, a married

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[94] Morison, "Faith," p. 261.

[95] Ibid., pp. 269-270.

[96] Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 163.

woman, Washington was still a successful and serene man.[97] Moreover, Morison argued that Marxist dialectial materialists were responsible for the "mass murder of historical characters."[98] Personalities of leaders lost their importance, since the figures became obscure among socioeconomic forces.

The scientific and new historians discounted the importance of literary art in history.[99] Morison, of course, vehemently disagreed, arguing that the scholar will not reach his public without literary style.[100] Morison criticized the teacher who taught his students to write "dull, solid monographs" that nobody outside the profession reads, for this caused the literary and talented either to abandon the discipline or to write more dull, solid books.[101]

Higham possibly had Morison in mind when he generalized that the few professional scholars who regretted the loss of artistic qualities in historical writing were basically conservative and nostalgic.[102] Longing for the revival of literary history, Morison considered Francis Parkman the greatest American historian.[103] Even when Alan Nevins,

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97 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 163.

98 Morison, "Faith," p. 270.

99 J. Higham, History, pp. 93, 104.

100 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 21.

101 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 291.

102 J. Higham, History, p. 106.

103 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 25.

Henry Steele Commager, James Phinney Baxter, and Conyers Read introduced a motion at the 1938 American Historical Association convention to create a monthly journal whose literary qualities would attract popular readers, Morison, the conservative, did not support this action.[104] Nevins mentioned that Morison, not wanting to upset Frederick Merk, an opponent of the proposal, remained neutral during the debate. The renegades eventually formed the Society of American Historians, which published American Heritage. Morison became a member in the early 1950's, only after the organization and its journal obtained a degree of respectability.[105]

Morison agreed more with relativist historians, such as Carl Becker and Charles Beard, than with scientific or "new" historians. Becker believed that historical facts are merely mental images that change with time,[106] and Morison admitted that the present day public "...asks very different questions of historians from those that (its) grandfathers' generation asked."[107] Further, both believed that the historian must reach the general public.[108]

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104 Allan Nevins, "Reminiscences," (Oral History Research Project, Columbia University), p. 243.

105 Ibid., and J. Higham, History, p. 80.

106 J. Higham, History, p. 122.

107 Morison, "Faith," p. 264.

108 Carl L. Becker, Everyman His Own Historian: Essays On History and Politics (New York: F.S. Crofts, 1935), p. 252.

Morison had far more in common with Beard than with Becker. While Beard argued that the historian must incorporate his personal experiences into his writing,[109] Morison's emphasis upon the sea and New England has already been documented. Moreover, both wrote lucid, readable history. Hugo L. Black, speaking of The Rise of American Civilization, stated that our early past became a "fascinating story, as easy to read as a fine novel."[110] Furthermore, in his review of The Maritime History of Massachusetts, Beard paid tribute to Morison's literary excellence.[111] Both loathed academia's ivory tower historian, arguing that the scholar has a duty to provide society with the benefits of his discoveries.[112] Also, the two historians realized that preconceived ideas on the part of the writer will affect historical interpretations. The scholar's philosophy of life, according to Morison, influenced his choice of facts, his distribution of emphasis

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109 Charles A. Beard, "Grounds For A Reconsideration of Historiography," in Theory and Practice In Historical Study, Report by the Committee on Historiography (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1946), p. 5.

110 Howard K. Beale, ed., Charles A. Beard An Appraisal by Eric F. Goldman, Harold J. Laski, Howard K. Beale, Walton Hamilton, George Soule, Merle Curti, George R. Leighton, Richard Hofstadter, Max Lerner, Luther Gulick, George S. Counts, Arthur W. Macmahon, with a Forward by Hugo L. Black (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1954), p. xi.

111 Charles A. Beard, "Maritime Massachusetts: The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860," review of The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860, by Samuel Eliot Morison, in the New Republic, January 25, 1922, p. 253.

112 Beale, ed., Charles A. Beard, p. 149, and Samuel Eliot Morison, The Scholar in America: Past, Present, and Future (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 31.

among them, and his sense of their relative significance.[113] Beard, who spoke of the historian's "frame of reference," argued that the writer arranges evidence according to what he deems possible, necessary, and desirable.[114]

Morison, however, strongly disagreed with the relativist historians when they attempted to foresee the future. Becker believed that the interpretation of the past should enable readers to anticipate future events. Such prognosis would permit men to evaluate what he might expect to do in light of previous accomplishments.[115] Morison, on the other hand, believed that attempts to foresee the future should be the secondary, instead of the primary, function of the historian. Speaking of the naval history, he claimed that his major goal was to describe what really happened, not to convince the American people to maintain a strong navy, as he personally believed the nation should.[116]

Morison was particularly opposed to Beard's political activism and to his interpretations of events leading to American involvement in World War II. Beard, who designed a plan for economic recovery during the 1930's and drafted a revised state milk law for fellow

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113 Morison, "Faith," p. 263.

114 Charles A. Beard, "Written History as An Act of Faith," American Historical Review, XXXIX (January, 1934), p. 227.

115 Becker, Everyman, p. 242.

116 Morison, "Faith," p. 264.

Connecticut farmers, believed that the historian must attempt to shape public policy.[117] Though Morison participated in the peace talks following World War I, worked to free Sacco and Vanzetti, and contributed to the Massachusetts Housing Code, he was not politically active since the mid-1920's.[118] Moreover, he believed that Beard's book, President Roosevelt and The Coming of The War, was so full of suppressio veri and suggestio falsi that it would take another one to expose the errors.[119] According to Morison, the author lacked intellectual honesty and skepticism because he rejected facts that did not fit into his preconceived attitudes.[120]

Morison had almost as many differences with the post World War II historians as he had with earlier ones. Chaos caused by the harsh economic era of the 1930's, the wartime situation, and the beginnings of the Cold War encouraged historians to study factors which tended towards stability within society, such as our national character or similarities among immigrant groups. This quest for permanent factors within American life led to the growth of inter-disciplinary studies because social scientists and literary critics, as well as historians, became involved with these issues.[121] David Potter's People of Plenty:

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117 J. Higham, History, p. 128.

118 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 56.

119 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 339.

120 Ibid., pp. 332-3.

121 J. Higham, History, p. 223.

Economic Abundance and The American Character (1954) and Oscar Handlin's The Uprooted (1951) are examples.[122]

Though it has been shown above that during this period, Morison believed the historian should attempt to preserve national traditions, he continued, as before, to discount the statistical, economic, and psychological interpretations that concerned many colleagues. This was particularly evident in The Ropemakers of Plymouth, a study of the Plymouth Cordage Company. The book was based upon company records and other sources, which are not specified.[123] There was no indication of the author consulting either Federal or state documents describing wage levels. Morison stated that, "It was (the Company's) policy then as that of the Company since, to pay going wages, or a little better. What this pay amounted to in 'real wages' we shall leave the economists to determine."[124] Surely, with some effort, Morison could have convinced a local economist to assist him in interpretating the relevant data. Morison dismissed without explanation the claim of an employee named Bartolomeo Vanzetti, the same who was later convicted of questionable murder charges, that the firm controlled the Boston Post.[125] Similarly, Vanzetti claimed that he was blacklisted

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122 J. Higham, History, p. 224-25.

123 Samuel Eliot Morison, The Ropemakers of Plymouth: A History of The Plymouth Cordage Company, 1824-1949 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), p. v.

124 Ibid., p. 23.

125 Ibid., p. 112.

for strike activities, but Morison accepted company records at face value, indicating that he was not an employee during the period in question.[126]

Bruce Mazlish, the well-known psycho-historian, told me that Morison "...had no interest in (psycho-history) and would probably have been opposed to its way of proceeding."[127] Though Morison believed that the work of Freud, Ellis, and Jung, which led to research and discussion on the subconscious, was extremely valuable, he thought that it had been exposed to "popular simplifications and distortions."[128] Classic writers, such as Plutarch, Herodotus, Eschylus, and Euripides, according to Morison, offered better insights than advocates of psychology because the former broadened the reader's outlook and provided more realistic understandings of the nature of mankind.[129]

Though Morison attempted to write from the viewpoint of a social historian in the late 1960's, he was not successful in doing so. The Preface to the second Harrison Gray Otis biography stated that the book was an attempt to keep up with the "new school of social history... to which no detail of how people lived is inconsequential."[130] The

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126 Samuel Eliot Morison, The Ropemakers of Plymouth: A History of the Plymouth Cordage Company, 1824-1949 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), pp. 112-13.

127 Letter from Bruce Mazlish, February 2, 1977.

128 Morison, Oxford History (2nd ed.; 1972), III, p. 246.

129 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 296.

130 Samuel Eliot Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848: The Urbane Federalist (2nd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), pp. ix-x.

author, however, treated the new school in terms of how children addressed their parents, descriptions of garden and bedroom ornaments, and entertainment at the Quincy's.[131] This conception of social history reaffirms Morison's resemblance to the nineteenth century writer who also studied social topics in similar contexts. Thorough evaluations of class and psychology, as well as other social forces, which current historians believe significant, were considered neither by Morison, nor by the patrician historian whom he admired.

The 1954 Report of The Committee on Historiography of the Social Science Research Council, an interdisciplinary association, cautioned against description of personal qualities without offering evidence as to how these characteristics were acquired -- advice that would have meant little to Morison.[132] Morison concluded the revised Otis biography by describing the subject's personality as "a genial, sunny nature that shed happiness."[133] This might be accurate and the reader might very well be interested in the assessment, but psychological interpretations somewhere in the book showing the origins of this personality would have made the volume still more interesting. Just as Morison probably could have convinced a local economist to assist him with The Ropemakers of Plymouth, with some effort, he very likely could have persuaded a local psychologist to help him with the Otis book.

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131 Samuel Eliot Morison, Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848: The Urbane Federalist (2nd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969), pp. 18, 196, 204.

132 Historical Study, p. 68.

133 Morison, Otis, (2nd.; 1972), p. 513.

While he did not use social science techniques in his work, Morison agreed with the post Second World War historians who reasserted the role of literary history. The development of interdisciplinary studies not only made economic and psychological interpreations more respectable, but also made the role of literature in history more reputable. It has been shown that throughout his career Morison was disenchanted over the loss of artistic values in historical scholarship. Morison's great literary ability will be discussed in detail in the following section.

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON - THE LITERARY ARTIST

Morison's work, which attracted both general, as well as specialized, readers placed him among our greatest literary historians. Henry Steele Commager referred to him as "probably our most distinguished stylist since Henry Adams."[134] The loss of literary style when the discipline became professionalized in the late nineteenth century disturbed Morison very much.

Few historians can hold readers in suspense, while describing events that lead to a dramatic climax, as well as Morison. In the Oxford History, the author told of John Kennedy's flying "...to Fort Worth, where he delivered his last speech and perfected the one that he was to have given the next day."[135] The following morning, after arriving in Dallas, the presidential party:

> ...drove toward the center of the city in an open car. At 12:30 P.M. shots rang out. A wretched young man, a returned expatriate from Russia, firing a rifle from the sixth floor window overlooking the presidential route, hit the President in the neck and the back of his head. Jack Kennedy, his head cradled in the lap of his indomitable wife, was rushed to a hospital where he was pronounced dead one hour after noon. 136

Freshman American History would be far more enjoyable if professors used the Oxford History, rather than other standard texts, such as that by Richard Hofstadter. An eminent historian in his own right, Hofstadter

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134 Letter from Henry Steele Commager, March 2, 1977.

135 Morison, Oxford History (2nd ed.; 1972), III, p. 498.

136 Ibid., pp. 498-99.

described the murder in a dry paragraph, stating that, "the shocking assassination...in Dallas, Texas, Friday November 22, 1963 obscured for the time..." who the 1964 Democratic ticket bearer would be.[137] Most people would rather read Morison's account instead of that by Hofstadter. Perhaps, the dramatic statement might even encourage some to pursue the subject further.

Morison was an expert at recreating events, allowing the public to view the action as the participants had. Despite the likelihood of his being familiar with the outcome, the reader was, nevertheless, suspensefully drawn to the edge of his seat waiting for the story's climax. The Pearl Harbor attack described first from the Japanese viewpoint illustrated the enemy's emotions, and then described from the American perspective portrayed the element of surprise equally as well. Morison exclaimed that:

> All hands on the carriers who could be spared from duties below were summoned to the flight decks, officers made speeches and the actual flag which had been displayed from Admiral Togo's flagship was raised to the masthead of Akagi. It was a high moment of frenzied patriotic emotion... during a night of thick overcast through which the moon showed a faint light, Striking Force charged forward at 26 knots. Heavy cruisers Tone and Chikuma thrust ahead to catapult two float planes for reconnaissance. They reported everything calm in Pearl Harbor...It was still dark and the carriers pitched badly in the swell, but the launching of the first attack was effected without mishap and the 183 planes orbited waiting for their strike commander, Captain Fuchida, to give the word go. 138

The author later stated that:

> The sound of church bells at Honolulu, ringing for eight o'clock mass, came over the harbor, whose calm surface was only lightly rippled by the breeze. Many officers were at breakfast, others were just rising; seamen were lounging on deck talking, reading, or writing letters home.

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138 Samuel Eliot Morison, The Two Ocean War: A Short History of The United States Navy In The Second World War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. 47.

> As the hour for morning colors approached, sailors in white uniforms removed the jack and ensign for their lockers, a blue jacket on the signal bridge hoisted the Blue Peter and boatswains were set to pipe the preparatory signal at 1755.
>
> A few seconds before or after that hour - nobody could remember which - the air suddenly seemed filled with strange planes, hovering, darting, diving. 139

The imaginative person is taken from his home and placed in the midst of the action, reliving it as if he were actually there.

Morison succeeded in his attempts to attract general and specialized readers because he wrote such lucid history. The Nation, in its review of his first book, praised the author's feat of writing a readable book that appealed to a wide range of people.[140] Furthermore, Morison believed that the scholar must have faith in the receptiveness of all audiences. He wanted to see book clubs accept more work by history professors in their monthly adaptions.[141]

He was not only a literary historian, but also a vivid and sometimes, humorous story-teller. Recounting an early childhood incident, Morison stated that:

> One autumn day in 1887 Dr. Charles Montraville Green... was walking along Brimmer Street, at the foot of Beacon Hill in Boston. As he approached No. 44, his astonished gaze beheld a baby carriage, unattended, bouncing down the stone steps. Upon hitting the sidewalk it pitch-poled, hurling the contents - one mattress, one pillow and one

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139 Samuel Eliot Morison, The Two Ocean War: A Short History of The United States Navy In The Second World War (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. 58.

140 "A Leading Federalist: The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis, Federalist, 1765-1848." review of The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis, Federalist, 1765-1848, by Samuel Eliot Morison, in the Nation, February 19, 1914, p. 185.

141 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 291.

> baby - into Brimmer Street. By a strange quirk of fate, the mattress landed first with baby on top, and the pillow on top of him. Dr. Green rushed forward, expecting to administer first aid to the howling infant, but found him unhurt, and identified him as Samuel Eliot Morison...142

This possibly indicates that had he devoted his life to fiction rather than history, Morison might have been a great novelist. In another parable, equally as entertaining, he compared his writing to a woman baking a piecrust.

> First she properly mixes the dough, then rolls it out, slapping it over and over, but in so doing she dubs in little bits of butter until it is the right consistency to bake. So, I take my first draft,...dub in more facts, reflections, opinions, or conclusions, slap the paragraphs about, reject the irrelevant, read it to Priscilla for her astute criticism, and have the whole retyped, and send it to the printer to be baked. Then, just as the old-time housewife may crimp the edges of the pie and cut slits in the top crust, so my last revision and smoothing up is done when the work is in proof, postponing as long as possible the final freezing of the prose in print. 143

The extensive care Morison put into his writing is clearly illustrated.

In two essays, "History As a Literary Art,"[144] and "The Experiences and Principles of An Historian,"[145] Morison advised the student how he might improve his own writing. The historian should write as much as possible at one sitting to improve literary quality.[146] Once the schol-

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142 Morison, One Boy's, p. 1.

143 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 51.

144 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, pp. 289-98.

145 Morison, ed., Vistas, pp. 20-57.

146 Ibid., p. 50.

ar bogins writing, he should continue without verifying facts and quotes, or incorporating footnotes.[147] Morison stated, "Even if your ideas of what you want to say are nebulous, start writing, and the sky will clear as fair weather always follow foul."[148] If this rule were followed consistently, the amount written at each session would eventually increase. He pointed out that the Maritime History of Massachusetts was completed in only eleven months, despite his maintaining a full teaching schedule half of that time.[149]

Morison believed that the researcher should not become excessively dependent upon notes. He maintained that the student's literary ability suffers greatly when he becomes too bogged down in them.[150] Referring to the French Revolution by Thomas Carlyle, he asked, "Can you imagine that wonderful story of fire and passion being written out of a stack of cards?"[151] Morison compared Carlyle's masterpiece to the Durants' histories, arguing that the latter resembled "processed cheese" more than history, since they were based upon hundreds of notes collected from secondary sources.[152] Also, according to Morison, Frederick Jackson Turner was a "prisoner of his cards and slips."[153] Turner died

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147 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, pp. 293-94.

148 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 53.

149 Ibid., pp. 50-51.

150 Ibid., p. 49.

151 Ibid.

152 Ibid., p. 50.

153 Ibid., p. 49.

leaving four or five books unfinished because he always had to do more research prior to writing.

Morison advised the historian to do his own research. Douglas Freeman's biography of George Washington was unreadable, in his opinion, because the author, who depended upon the research of others, failed to digest the facts adequately.[154] Freeman's other books, R.E. Lee and Lee's Lieutenants, however, were extremely well written, since the author did almost all the research himself.

The historian, according to Morison, should be encouraged to visit historical landmarks.[155] Personal observation enables him to describe events in such a way that the reader can visualize the action. R.G. Collingwood advocated a similar idea stating that the historian should re-enact past thoughts.[156] Morison revered Francis Parkman not only for his literary abilities, but also for his willingness to visit landmarks,[157] and had contempt for mere "library navigators" who criticized the abilities of New World discoverers.[158] Besides retracing the routes of Columbus and personally participating in World War II naval operations, Morison also took advantage of an offer by the Commander of the Far East

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154 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 50.

155 Morison, "Faith," p. 273.

156 R.G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1946), pp. 158, 215.

157 Samuel Eliot Morison, Francis Parkman (1823-1893), (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1973), no pagination.

158 Morison, Southern Voyages, p. 138.

Air Fleet to visit Okinawa and Chichi Jima, as well as an offer by the Coast Guard to follow the routes of Drake.[159]

Believing that few things contribute more to the effectiveness of good history than vivid quotations, Morison was a master at incorporating them into his work. In Old Bruin, the author cited a contemporary midshipman, William Lynch, when describing an encounter with pirates near Cuba:

> The pirates gave way, slowly at first, but when our leader called out 'push home, men! and no quarter!' and the cry 'no quarter! no quarter!' was fiercely repeated they turned, and springing to the side, leaped overboard, and endeavored to escape by swimming. Many of our men plunged after them sword in hand; others jumped to the boats, and pursuing, cut them down as they overtook them...160

The action-packed statement, in addition to adding drama to the story, also gave the reader a keen sense of participation in the event.

The study of classic languages and great novelists was another step to improve writing abilities. Morison claimed that Greek and Latin are excellent cures for sloppy grammar.[161] According to him, "If your ambition be the ability to 'put it across' in your mother tongue, the longest way round, by Rome and Greece, is the shortest way to your home audience."[162] Furthermore, Morison challenged the student to "see if

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159 Bruce-Briggs, "Quarterdeck," pp. 80-81, and Morison, Southern Voyages, p. ix.

160 Samuel Eliot Morison, Old Bruin: Commodore Matthew Galbraith Perry (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), pp. 78-79.

161 Morison, ed., Land and Sea, pp. 295-296.

162 Samuel Eliot Morison, The Ancient Classics: Commencement Addresses Delivered At The College of Wooster 12 June 1939 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 13.

(he) cannot learn" to characterize people and situations in descriptive terms from authors, such as Margaret Mitchell and, in his opinion, the greatest American novelist, Henry James.[163]

Without attempting to influence public policy as Beard and other relativist historians had, Morison realized that history must be made applicable to men and woman's current experiences if wide audiences are to read it. He often compared past experiences in light of the present situation. For instance, in The Southern Voyages, the navigational skills of Magellan were described in terms of modern sailing practices.

> He (Magellan) could hardly have shaped a better course if he had had modern sailing directions, not only avoiding dangerous, island-studded waters but making best use of prevailing winds and currents. Cast your eye over the United States government Pilot Chart of the South Pacific for January and February and you will see that Magellan followed the recommended sailing route from Cape Horn to Honolulu...[164]

In the same book, the author discussed sixteenth century sexual mores in relation to those of today.

> Whilst Columbus' letters and reports were written for the eyes of a chaste queen whom he did not wish to offend, Vespucci went in detail into native (Indian) sexual customs that appealed to the public in the early Sixteenth Century - as they do in the late twentieth. [165]

Morison also considered the Japanese impressions of Commodore Perry in terms of "...an announcement by astronauts that weird-looking aircraft from outer space were on their way to earth..."[166] References to modern technology, sex, and science fiction would most certainly

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[163] Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 297.

[164] Morison, Southern Voyages, pp. 407-08.

[165] Ibid., p. 288.

[166] Morison, Old Bruin, p. 319.

touch the interest of many present day readers.

Morison recommended deleting extensive footnote and bibliographic references because they distract the general reader. In the Preface to the second edition of the Oxford History, the author exclaimed that it is "...a history written for my fellow citizens to read and enjoy."[167] Therefore, he omitted "...footnotes, references, bibliographies, and other 'scholarly apparatus...'"[168] In By Land and By Sea, he hoped to "appeal to a popular audience" by revising the essays, and disregarding "...practically every footnote, bibliographical appendix, and the like..."[169]

Morison believed that successful teaching will also contribute to one's writing ability. The instructor, who hopes to keep his students' attention, like the writer who attempts to interest his readers, must think issues through, answering those "inconvenient questions" clearly and precisely.[170] Morison, the educator, is discussed more completely in the following section. Besides offering greater insight into his literary abilities, consideration of him as a teacher also places his outlook in greater perspective.

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167 Morison, Oxford History (2nd ed.; 1972), I, p. ix.

168 Ibid.

169 Knopf, "Reading, Writing and History," p. 103.

170 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 41.

SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON - THE EDUCATOR

A balanced account of Morison must consider him as an educator, as well as an historian and writer, since he was a teacher for over forty years. He was concerned with education at elementary, secondary and adult, as well as university levels. As a traditionalist who believed that the classic type of education, such as his own, was the best, he disagreed with modern methods of teacher training. He argued that a thorough understanding of subject matter, and an ability to present this information enthusiastically are the keys to successful teaching. In the classroom, Morison used visual aids, and assigned practical projects to motivate his students. Furthermore, he believed that professors must maintain channels of communication with and respect the rights of students.

Morison's books, which attracted wide audiences, made significant contributions towards adult education. It has already been noted that he believed the scholar has a duty to disseminate his knowledge among the general population. Moreover, he praised St. Thomas Moore's utopian ideal of providing free education to youngsters who would, in later years, attend lectures in their spare time.[171]

"Hack authors," who wrote elementary and secondary textbooks, disturbed Morison.[172] These writers, while avoiding controversial issues,

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171 Morison, Scholar, p. 28.

172 "PPA Press Conference," Publishers Weekly, CLXXXVII (March 22, 1965), p. 43.

produced poor, dull books which not only failed to describe great events, but were also overstuffed with illustrations put together haphazardly by the publishers. Morison contributed towards improving this situation. The New York Herald Tribune Book Review called his work for children, The Story of the "Old Colony" of New Plymouth (1956), "The outstanding historical book for young people of this season or many seasons..."[173] Moreover, he hoped to "cap" his career with a readable high school level history textbook.[174] In a 1967 correspondence to Alan Collins, his literary agent, Morison mentioned the possibility of an Oxford History junior edition, but I have not been able to locate subsequent reference to this project.[175]

Morison's New England brahminic outlook, which looked down upon the masses of society, was evident in his dislike of modern teacher training techniques and progressive educators. Though he was first pleased at the creation of a Master's program in education at Harvard, calling it a "necessary innovation," he later realized that the education departments were subordinating subject knowledge to educational theory.[176] He argued that professional educators would eventually

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173 "Rockbound Coast to Desert Cliff: America In Song and Story," review of The Story of The "Old Colony" of New Plymouth, by Samuel Eliot Morison, in the New York Herald Tribune, November 18, 1956, pt. 2, p. 3.

174 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 42.

175 Letter Samuel Eliot Morison to Alan Collins, January 13, 1967, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Curtis Brown Manuscript Collection.

176 Samuel Eliot Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 471.

jeopardize academic freedom by dictating to others what can be said in the classroom and how it should be taught, and by prohibiting those unfamiliar with educational method from teaching.[177] Morison referred to the Columbia Teacher's College as the "...fruitful mother of neo-Deweyism and other educational quackeries," and to education professors as "shabby" minded individuals who filled the journals with nonsense."[178] The progressive educators, in particular, were responsible for the lowering of instructional standards because the elimination of tests brought the bright child down to the level of the "stupid" majority.[179] This might be true to a limited extent, but Morison's elitist attitude, which belittled the majority as stupid, was unjustified and showed class prejudice. It never occurred to Morison that progressive educators, in creating special classes for the "morons" to prevent them from obtaining "inferiority complex(es)," might stimulate gifted children who were previously underachieving.[180] Peer pressure in these courses, according to Morison, instead of encouraging excellence among bright children, forced them to act like average ones to avoid ridicule.[181]

Other examples also illustrated his upper class, aristocratic out-

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177 Samual Eliot Morison, Freedom in Contemporary Society (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 130.

178 Ibid., pp. 129-130.

179 Morison, Scholar, p. 26.

180 Morison, Ancient Classics, p. 17.

181 Morison, Scholar, p. 26.

look. Morison criticized the democratization of higher education during this century, pointing out that only two hundred and thirty-eight thousand attended colleges in 1900, but there will be five million by 1970 if standards were not raised.[182] The possibility that five million students can meet already acceptable standards never occurred to him, but criteria must be raised still higher to inhibit these masses. Furthermore, in Three Centuries of Harvard, the author commended University President Kirkland for supporting a "sound and liberal" education for elitist students, rather than a "cheap and practical" one, which I believe would have benefited more people.[183]

The sound and liberal education advocated by Kirkland, Morison thought, was best obtained through a traditional classical background. Reflecting upon his own education, he wished that he had studied the classics his first three years at Harvard, while devoting only the fourth one to modern history.[184] Morison believed that depriving youth of this classical tradition was "the greatest educational crime of the century," since it was the best way of guaranteeing a solid mental outlook during formal schooling, as well as in later life.[185] Perhaps, if today's masses of children who can barely read were introduced to the classics as Morison advocated for gifted youngsters, their liter-

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182 Morison, Freedom, p. 142.

183 Morison, Three Centuries, p. 228.

184 Morison, Ancient Classics, pp. 11-12.

185 Morison, Three Centuries, pp. 389-90.

acy might improve.

While believing that a background in the classics is the key to a better education, Morison claimed that an understanding of subject matter and the ability to present it in an intelligent, enthusiastic manner is the passport to better teaching.[186] Comprehension of subject matter comes with continual research. According to Morison, the professor who believed that he must merely give "so many courses for undergraduates," without investigating new issues or requestioning familiar ones provides a great disservice.[187] In the classroom, Morison's understanding of his subject, when combined with his charisma, resulted in what Frederick Henrich called "sparkling literary productions" that always motivated their listeners.[188] Philip K. Lundeberg, Curator and Supervisor of the Division of Naval History at the Smithsonian, stated that, "Morison's lectures were clear, well organized, abounding with the requisite maps and charts, and on occasion pure masterpieces,"[189] While Robin Higham mentioned that Morison was a "sound, but not a great classroom teacher," he still said that Morison lectured in a clear, engrossing style, and he remembered him distributing photocopies of a 1775 steel engraved map to illustrate the siege of Boston.[190] On

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186 Morison, ed., Vistas, p. 42.

187 Morison, Three Centuries, pp. 335-36.

188 Henrich, private interview.

189 R. Higham and Lundeberg, "S.E. Morison," p. 145.

190 Ibid., p. 146.

another occasion, Morison used a 1612 edition of a map by Champlain.[191] Both visual aids were bound to raise the interests of students far more than copies from most historical atlases.

Morison also motivated his students with practical assignments that were intended to have lasting value. Under his direction, graduate seminar students contributed articles on minor New Englanders to the Dictionary of American Biography,[192] and learned the "gentle art" of proof reading from sample pages of the manuscript of Of Plymouth Plantation.[193] Moreover, Frederick Henrich recalled that Morison, at least once, took his students on a field trip to Rhode Island to study inscriptions in the Dighton Rock.[194]

To enhance the education process, Morison attempted to maintain good relations with students, and showed unusual respect for their rights. Speaking of Harvard's rigid marking system between the 1830's and the 1850's, he stated that it "...poisoned the already hostile relations between students and instructors, and made social intercourse between them impossible."[195] Walter Muir Whitehill, his close friend, pointed out that graduate students often visited Morison's home, where they were

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191 Samuel Eliot Morison, Samuel de Champlain: Father of New France (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), p. xii.

192 Dumas Malone, "Reminiscences," (Oral History Research Project, Columbia University), pp. 8-9.

193 Knopf, "Reading, Writing and History," p. 102.

194 Henrich, private interview.

195 Morison, Three Centuries, p. 260.

served fine wine and first rate cigars.[196] Henrich remembered that Morison once invited a graduate class to his home for a holiday celebration.[197] Referring to conflicts between Mr. Dock, a Greek Professor, and lower classmen in 1834, Morison spoke sarcastically of teachers who attempted to bully students.

> The Faculty, as usual, attempted to 'make an example' of a few students; their classmates protested, at first by petition, and then, when that failed, by breaking the tutor's windows, destroying his furniture, and ringing the college bell in the middle of the night.[198]

Except for the political implications, this sounds like a page out of the 1960's.

While attempting to maintain close relations with the student body, Morison still did not tolerate those who were lax in their classwork. Prior to teaching, he would sometimes ask the collegians questions derived from required readings. Henrich recollected that Morison, in one instance, left the lecture hall just moments after the class began because he believed the students had not properly prepared for the session.[199]

Considering Morison as an educator offers a better understanding of him as an historian and a writer because so many of his activities in both these capacities, were related to his efforts as a teacher. It has already been noted that he became interested in Columbus while pre-

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196 Whitehill, "Forward," p. 20.

197 Henrich, private interview.

198 Morison, Three Centuries, p. 252.

199 Henrich, private interview.

paring his Colonial history course. Moreover, Admiral of the Ocean Seas, which brought the author into the public eye as a sailor historian, played a significant role in convincing President Roosevelt to appoint him the official World War II naval historian. Probably even more important, as already noted, Morison believed good teaching habits contributed to literary style.

CONCLUSION

Since Morison's death numerous articles have paid tribute to this great man.[200] However, these accounts have been partially unbalanced because the authors ignored his weaknesses, failed to study adequately his role as an educator, minimized his contribution to the methodology of history, and did not consider him in relation to other twentieth century historians. This essay is an attempt to remedy the situation.

Regarding Morison's limitations, the treatment of Blacks in ethnocentric terms, which sometimes came very close to racism, was probably his greatest one. Furthermore, he spoke of balance in his presidential address before the American Historical Association, but his interpretation of the post war years was anything but balanced.

Morison's role as an historian and writer should not be studied apart from his activities as an educator. Teaching was an intricate part of his career. Besides improving his literary abilities by forcing him to answer questions clearly and to motivate his students as he would his readers, it also contributed to his prolificacy. He believed that constant research was vital to quality instruction, and more often than not, published his findings. Furthermore, as already noted, Morison became fascinated with Columbus and vowed to retrace his routes while preparing the colonial history course. The subsequent research and publication of Admiral of the Ocean Seas, which placed him in the public eye as a sailor historian, helped convince President Roosevelt to

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200 Bruce Catton, "The Way I Saw It," American Heritage, XXVII (OCtober, 1976), 54., R. Higham, "S.E. Morison," Knopf, "Reading, Writing and History," and Whitehill, "Forward."

appoint him the official World War II naval historian.

The history student can learn much from studying Morison's work. While his interpretations were not always well balanced, he still emphasized the importance of intellectual honesty and skepticism, as well as the significance of visiting historical sites. He also gave a great deal of advice concerning the improvement of literary style — study the classic languages, read the great novelists, such as Henry James, and write as much as possible in one sitting without becoming excessively dependant upon notes. Failing to make original contributions to the methodology of history and avoiding methodological issues until late in his career, Morison, nevertheless, offered much guidance to others for improving their own techniques.[201] The willingness to provide this direction again illustrates his role as an educator.

One hundred years from now, Morison will still be widely read and well respected for the same reasons Francis Parkman is today. While Parkman described the forest in artistic terms from first hand knowledge, Morison did the same for the sea in prose equally as literary. Referring to Commodore Perry's ship, the Somers, he stated:

> Flying fish flashed silver past the foam at her bow. Puffy tradewind clouds raced her overhead, and occasionally one lashed her with rain. No throb of engines assaulted the ear; there were no sounds but the striking of the ship's bell, the creaking of spars and timbers, lines slatting against the sails, and the rush and gurgle of great waters. Every few hours the square sails changed color: golden gossamer when the last-quarter moon rose, polished silver just before dawn,

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201 When preparing for a significant philosophical statement, his presidential inaugural address before the American Historical Association in 1950, he used five major sources, four of which were published in either 1949 or 1950. Morison, ed., Land and Sea, p. 346. If he studied methodology as a student, the earlier works certainly failed to impress him.

> ruddy at sunrise, and cream-white at high noon. But the fatigued, harassed and anxious officers, and the conspirators guessing whether or not they were found out, had neither taste nor time for aesthetic appreciation. 202

The passage also indicates a remarkable ability to characterize peoples' feelings in contexts of physical settings — a quality that is frequently evident in Parkman's work. "Night Watch In the City of Boston," a poem by Archibald MacLeish, appropriately referred to Morison's knack for describing human emotions.

> and you, our Yankee Admiral of the Ocean Sea,
> come too, come walk with me.
> You know, none better, how the Bay wind blows
> Fierce in the soul as in the streets its ocean snows. 203

While Parkman's ability to combine art and experience with history has been the keys to his continued popularity, Morison's popularity among future generations will be equally as great for identical reasons.

Morison's success is no mystery. His family situation, as well as the special relationship he had with the American Government, surely contributed to his good fortune. He was born wealthy, his grandfather, a former Harvard professor, began studying with him when he was merely three years old, and his family sent him to the best private schools, encouraged his love for the sea, and even more significant, financed the publication of his first book, The Life and Letters of Harrison Gray Otis. Moreover, during World War II he sometimes received invitations from knowledgeable officials to visit at specified times and places, which conve-

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202 Morison, Old Bruin, p. 154.

203 New and Collected Poems, 1917-1976 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976), p. 3.

niently turned out to be battle sites.[204] Furthermore, as already noted, the Chief of Naval Operations arranged for a Smithsonian scholar to assist him in researching the Far East, the Commander of the Far East Air Fleet offered him a plane to visit Okinawa and Chichi Jima, and the Coast Guard provided him with a cutter to trace the explorations of Drake while preparing the Southern Voyages. These factors, however, were not the keys to Morison's accomplishments. Literary ability, combined with ambition and a keen sense of adventure, enabled him to take full advantage of the beneficial situations. Others lacking such qualities would not have been able to do so. Like the Yankee housewife baking her piecrust, Morison, a tireless and persistent worker, put much effort into his work, rewriting and editing again and again until the finished product met his high standards.

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[204] Whitehill, "Forward," p. 9.

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